

Access for Disabled People Policy

1 MISSION AND COMMITMENT

Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums (TWAM) mission is **to help people determine their place in the world and define their identities, so enhancing their self-respect and their respect for others.**

Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums commitment is to a world-class service that is innovative, imaginative, creative, totally inclusive, secure and sustainable.

2 ACCESS STATEMENT

Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums is committed to ensuring that all aspects of its museums' activities are fully accessible to all sectors of the community by removing or reducing any physical, sensory or intellectual barriers to access.

TWAM adopts the social model of disability, namely, that people are disabled by the built environment, attitudes and lack of access to information, not by impairments.

TWAM will consult regularly with disabled people to ensure that everyone can access its facilities and services. This consultation will be achieved through the *Museums and Galleries Access Group* (see below) and through consultation with organisations of disabled people as appropriate for particular initiatives.

TWAM will take positive steps to promote equality for all disabled people as visitors, stakeholders, volunteers and employees.

3 AIMS

In fulfilling its mission and in expediting its work with audiences and communities, TWAM seeks to reflect the diversity of its communities and users through:

- collections of objects and associated information
- displays and exhibitions
- public and learning programmes
- public and employee facilities

In addition, TWAM will produce and implement inclusive policies, practices and procedures. These in turn will lead to the increase in understanding and enjoyment of our collections and facilities by all visitors.

In order to enable this to happen we will endeavour to provide effective, accessible and appropriate formats for the presentation and delivery of all information within our venues, in our published and promotional material, and on our website.

As part of our commitment, we will ensure that contractors, consultants and outside agencies working for or with TWAM, or on TWAM premises, adopt and observe the provisions of this Access for Disabled People Policy and of Newcastle City Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.

We will be driven by a desire to provide an excellent service to all our users. We will ensure that this desire becomes embedded in our organisation and that effective provision of services for disabled users and stakeholders becomes a goal of every employee.

4 OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

TWAM will strive to achieve the following objectives:

- 4.1 To strive for excellence in the delivery of service to disabled users and to become an exemplar of best practice.
- 4.2 To comply with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) by avoiding discrimination against disabled people in employment (1996), information, policy, practice and procedures (1999) service provision and access to buildings and premises (2004).
- 4.3 To actively encourage participation in the activities of TWAM by disabled people as service users, staff, and volunteers.
- 4.4 To make reasonable adjustments, as appropriate, for disabled people and their carers, to ensure maximum participation in our programmes and use of our facilities, and recruitment and retention of the best workforce.
- 4.5 To ensure that contractors, consultants and outside agencies working with or within TWAM meet the same standards as we would expect to meet, ourselves.
- 4.6 To provide all staff with adequate guidelines, information and training to enable them to carry out their responsibilities effectively and with confidence.
- 4.7 To improve visitor facilities by the provision of accessible lavatories, signage, lighting, cafés and seating and to provide better access to offices and stores; where stores are physically inaccessible, to give people access to objects and information by using computers and other new technologies.

5 RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Effective engagement with disabled people, be they service users, stakeholders or staff, is the responsibility of every employee, volunteer and indeed member of governing bodies. Responsibilities for particular groups of employees are detailed in 6, below, however, every member of staff and every volunteer will have responsibility for:

- contributing towards providing a world-class, totally inclusive service
- implementing and promoting the Equal Opportunities policies and procedures of Newcastle City Council and of TWAM
- eradicating, and holding as unacceptable, direct and indirect discrimination against individuals on any grounds
- familiarising themselves with the provisions of this Access for Disabled People Policy and committing to its objectives and requirements
- participating in relevant training and development in order to maintain a commitment to equal access and to increase skills and knowledge in this area
- identifying personal and organisational skills and knowledge gaps in disability issues
- being familiar, practised and confident with fire egress and evacuation procedures for disabled staff and visitors in their workplace.
- understanding the particular duties and responsibilities specified for their role in the organisation within the sections which follow.
- ensuring that they are aware of the TWAM Access Working Group, and its work.

6. AREAS OF PARTICULAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR STAFF GROUPS

Some groups of staff will have responsibility for the delivery of specific areas of this Access for Disabled People Policy. The areas of responsibility are NOT exclusive to the groups identified, and DO NOT exclude any staff, either from their responsibilities for delivering an accessible service, or from identifying opportunities to improve and develop this service. The following paragraphs, however, indicate the groups of staff who are expected to lead on particular issues:

6.1 Senior Management Team

The Director and Senior Managers will:

- Nominate one of their number to have overall responsibility for access policies, procedures and issues.
- Identify central budget provision for access initiatives and secure designated finance for access developments and an ongoing

programme of Disability Equality training and development for all staff.

- Monitor, evaluate and review Access and all other policies and procedures to ensure legislative compliance and achieve best practice.
- Maintain an Access Working Group with cross cutting representation from within TWAM
- Promote access initiatives and communicate examples of good practice throughout the Museum profession.
- Through the TWAM Access Working Group, maintain and resource a Museum and Galleries Access Group: a group of disabled people, to act as a consultative group advising on access issues.
- Ensure design and construction of facilities includes best practice physical, sensory and intellectual access for every visitor.

6.2 Building Managers

Staff with overall responsibility for TWAM premises will:

- Ensure that fire egress and evacuation procedures for disabled staff and visitors in their venue(s) are safe, well defined, commonly known, implemented and practised.
- Provide staff and volunteers with clear guidelines for access around buildings.
- Produce a floor plan guide for their venue(s) together with large print and tactile versions, as appropriate.
- Optimise the provision and regular maintenance of wheelchairs, visual fire alarms, Evac chairs, induction loops and the range of seating available in galleries and reception areas.
- Ensure that all external contractors, consultants and outside agencies working on their premises are familiar with and work within the terms of TWAM's Access for Disabled People Policy.
- Attempt to make museum buildings welcoming and easy to access and use.
- Ensure that all building refurbishment and development plans include best practice access standards that will at least meet BS 8300: 2001.
- Attempt to make sure that all audio information is available in printed format and that all printed information is available in other accessible formats (e.g. large text print format).

6.3 Curatorial staff

Staff with responsibilities for the collections will:

- Use exhibition programmes and the acquisitions policy review to develop our collections to reflect the cultural and social diversity of our communities, including disabled people.
- Make items from the collections available for handling, where possible, to make them accessible to people who will benefit from a sensory experience.
- Actively collect objects to be used as loans out for people who have difficulty visiting our museums.
- Consult user groups for advice on new displays, wherever possible.
- Use temporary exhibitions to provide a flexible way of targeting specific audiences.
- Commission and employ disabled artists.

6.4 Front of House staff

It is the role of all staff to interact with visitors and other users, however, for those whose primary responsibility it is to provide direct services to visitors, they should:

- Be aware of the need to ensure that all visitors are provided with an equal service.
- Be knowledgeable about the operation of facilities and equipment for use by, or provision of information to, Deaf and/or disabled people.
- Ensure that they do not refuse disabled people a service or adjustment that can reasonably be provided.
- Report to Building Managers on access issues, good and bad experiences and feedback comments from the visiting public.
- Be confident in providing information to, and in guiding disabled people.

6.5 Learning and Outreach and ICT staff

Staff responsible for providing learning and outreach events and activities and managing and developing ICT resources will:

- Develop contacts with disabled people and their representatives.
- Use learning activities and events to ensure participation by groups or organisations representing disabled people.
- Encourage disabled people to visit museums and museum activities.
- To build inclusion, diverse learning styles and equal access into the design and delivery of all events.
- Use ICT, in particular the World Wide Web, to enhance access to TWAM's services.
- Evaluate the outcomes of projects designed to enhance participation by disabled people and ensure dissemination of findings.
- Where appropriate, facilitate the loan of objects to people who have difficulty visiting our museums.

- Encourage under-represented groups to produce exhibitions about their own community experiences or issues of concern to them.

6.6 Communications staff

Staff with responsibilities for publicity and display materials will be responsible for :

- Effective and appropriate marketing of museums and their services to all actual and potential users.
- Utilising a range of media, such as print, Braille, audio and videotape, in appropriate languages and at various intellectual levels, as budgets allow.
- Development, benchmarking, updating, implementation and evaluation of Accessible Information Guidelines throughout TWAM.
- Monitoring and implementing the correct use of Access logos and symbols on all print materials and in buildings.

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A large print version of this policy is available from
Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums.

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